



Leeds Cancer Programme



Transforming cancer care together

22nd May 2020

Media Release

May Marks Skin Cancer Awareness Month

May is dedicated to the month long awareness of skin cancer. Skin cancer rates are on the increase as people are living longer, meaning that over their lifetime they are exposed to ultra-violet rays from the sun for a greater amount of time. In the UK, over 250 000 cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every year. It is therefore not surprising that in Leeds, skin cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer¹.

Due to the outbreak of Covid 19, GP practices in Leeds saw a decline in the number of patients consulting doctors with worrying changes to their skin. The key steer from Government has been to stay at home and protect the NHS, yet this may have created a number of people not getting the medical help and advice they still need. GPs across Leeds would like to reassure the local community that they are still here to give help and advice for any worrying changes.

Walayat Hussain, Consultant Dermatologist, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, said:

“Dermatologists in Leeds are encouraging you to contact your GP if you notice any changes to any mole, freckle or lump on your skin, particularly as we move into the warmer, summer months. Our advice is – if in doubt, check it out”

There are three common types of skin cancers which affect people. The most common, accounting for 75% of skin cancers are **Basal Cell Carcinomas (BCC)** and **Squamous Cell Carcinomas (SCC)**. These two cancers are referred to as ‘non-melanoma skin cancers’. The third type is **Melanoma**, which most often develops from an existing mole, or emerges as a new mole or skin lesion.

¹ Leeds CCG analysis of Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust 2 week-wait referral data, March 2019 – February 2020.

BCCs are more likely to develop on skin that is regularly exposed to the sun, especially on the face, head and neck and symptoms include:

- smooth and pearly
- waxy
- a firm, red lump or may look sunken in the middle
- a pearly brown or black lump if you have darker skin
- a flat, red spot that is scaly and crusty
- a pale non-healing scar.

SCCs usually develop in areas that have been damaged by sun exposure. In people with pale skin, they are mainly found on the face, neck, bald scalps, arms, backs of hands and lower legs.

In people with darker or black skin, SCCs are more likely to affect areas that have less or no sun exposure. These include the lower legs, torso, genitals or areas where there has been long-term scarring, for example after a burn. Symptoms include:

- look scaly
- have a hard, crusty scab
- look pink or red
- make the skin raised in the area of the cancer
- feel tender to touch
- bleed sometimes.

Melanomas can appear anywhere on the body. It arises from the pigment producing cells in the skin called melanocytes. Symptoms include:

- changes in an existing mole
- an irregularly shaped mole
- itchy, crusty or bleeding mole
- an unusual persistent lump.

ENDS

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Leeds Cancer Programme is a partnership between Macmillan Cancer Support, the NHS in Leeds and Leeds City Council to transform cancer services across the city. Through its dynamic and ambitious strategy, it is committed to delivering the best outcomes for all in Leeds through world class cancer services shaped by patients, carers and the wider public.